

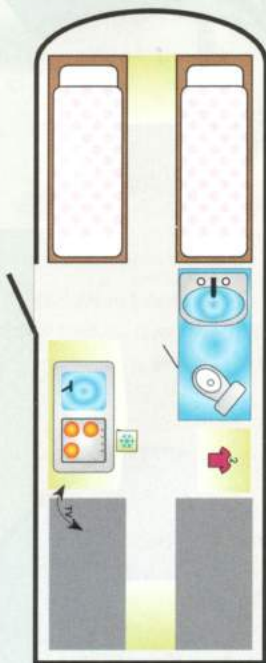


CARAVELAIR ANTARÈS 450

This newcomer from France is the only caravan with twin beds that can be transformed into a double bed

FACT FILE

- Berths 3
- Body length 5.3m
- Overall 6.4m
- Width 2.3m
- Headroom 1.95m
- WEIGHT
 - MIRO 980kg
 - MTPLM 1300kg
- Minimum towcar weight
 - Novice 1529kg
 - Expert 1300kg



TEST LOCATION

Little Orchard Caravan Park, Weeton, Kirkham, Lancashire

See the video review at caravan.ma/vanreviews



French-made, with stark styling, extreme light weight, robust quality, and an ambience that ensures they'll appeal to people with ultra-modern tastes, Caravelair Antarès caravans are comparable with no other range of tourers in Britain.

This is the lowest-priced tourer range in the UK, yet Caravelairs are equipped with all the essentials and more besides. They have hitch-head stabilisers, spare wheels, three-burner hobs, oven-grills, wheeled waste-water containers and even lights in the ovens. Perhaps just as significant is the level of furniture finesse and lighting style that identifies Caravelairs as both well-made and stylish.

Caravelairs are imported by Marquis Motorhomes & Caravans. The six-model range starts at £11,995 and gives buyers two layouts for families, four with double beds, one tiny two-berth – and this one, with its amazing bed configuration.

The 450 has single beds. But before you file it amid the vast array of twin-bed caravans available in Britain, this one is very different: the twin beds can be transformed into a giant double bed.

In typical continental style, the twin (or double) bed is at the front. The dining area is across the rear – and this can be turned into a wide single bed, making the Antarès one of a very rare breed of three-berth caravans.

More features mark out this caravan as something really unusual. One of them is the size of the gas bottle locker – and the generous width of its door, with an aperture 1.43m wide and 60cm deep. The lid rises high out of the way, with finger-tip ease. Lifting gas cylinders in and out of here is really easy. Both the spare wheel and the 30-litre wheeled waste water container that comes with the caravan are stored here – and there's still space for other items.

There's a lot to like about Antarès, but it's not praise all the way. The heating is gas only. The shower and toilet share a compartment. And Antarès models don't come with TV aerials – but then neither do Slovenian-made Adrias.

British expectancy leads us to assume most



buyers of an Antarès will want Marquis to fit an aerial, so we asked how much this would cost. The answer? Add £250 to the price of your Antarès and you're able to follow your favourite programmes on holiday.

Caravelair Antarès are made by the giant Trigano Group and the Marquis group then puts its own stamp on these caravans, adding the hitch-head stabiliser to the standard Antarès, and installing Marquis' unique Caraheat system, which sends warmed air out through two vents directly above the Truma heater. It's highly efficient, as we have previously discovered during reviews carried out in winter. But, because this is a gas-only system, you'll have to bear in mind the need to replace cylinders much more frequently than in a caravan equipped with the option to run the heating on mains power.

Caravelairs first arrived in Britain at Marquis' South Yorkshire branch last year. They quickly established themselves as best sellers there, and are now on display at other Marquis branches. We collected our review 450 from the Preston

£13,695 including delivery



branch, one of 11 scattered around England. Usefully, you can have your Caravelair serviced at any branch, no matter which branch you buy from.

The 450 was ours for a day. After a 30-minute tow to a quiet, secluded campsite a few miles from Lytham St Annes.

SHOWERING C

In Britain, we've come to take separate showers for granted. Yet here is a make of caravan selling very well without that luxury. If you don't mind drying out the shower tray and the entire compartment after every use, you'll find the 450's showering space quite adequate.

The compartment measures 1m x 75cm and contains a bench-style toilet, two very large mirrors, a small plastic cabinet under the basin and a much larger wall cabinet above the loo.

Everything you really need is here, in miniature. In the context of the compact length of the 450, it's really rather clever. But British separate-shower expectancy leaves us little option but to give it a modest C rating.

ABOVE The Antarès 450 is a lot of caravan for your money!

SLEEPING A*

Sleeping, on the other hand, earns a big fat A-star for its ingenuity and the size of the beds.

Caravelairs are clearly designed with tall caravanners in mind. The 450's twin beds are 1.95m long and 87cm wide.

You can transform the entire bed area into a luxuriously gigantic double bed, 2.1m wide. Two pieces of wood (stored under the beds) sit on ledges on the edges of the twin beds to complete the base, while infill mattress sections make up the bed. The mattresses are made of polyester and cotton, quite springy and exceptionally light to lift. There's more to mark out this superb bed as really special. The pillow ends can be raised, sunlounger-style, to turn them into daytime recliners. So your bedroom can be regarded as a lounge; hide away the duvet or sleeping bags under the beds, replace them with a couple of throws and your bedroom now looks more like a lounge – and the TV bracket, plus connections, are perfectly placed above the foot of one of the beds.



Words Val Chapman
Photos Richard Chapman

A* EXCEPTIONAL A VERY GOOD B GOOD C AVERAGE D BELOW AVERAGE



ABOVE An extra kitchen surface hinges up; it partly obstructs the doorway but there is still enough space to walk past easily

The dining area makes a single bed. The table leg folds (easily, with a click of a button) and rests on supports on the wall and on the edges of the seating unit bases. The bed is 1m wide and 1.92m long; again underlining the fact that Caravelairs are designed for tall people.

DINING A

French-made caravans do dining facilities well; in line with the French enthusiasm for cuisine, perhaps? The 450's table is substantially wider than those in British caravans, at 75cm, and it's 1.11m long. Plenty of space on which to spread out a feast! We love it, hence another A rating.

LOUNGING B

Lounging, though, is more difficult to assess by our rating scheme. That's because, well, by comparison with British-made caravans, there isn't a lounge. There's a first rate, four-seater dining area – and a couple of recliners at the other end of the caravan, as we detailed earlier. So relaxing opportunities are a given.

Good, then? We think so.

KITCHEN C

A 34cm-wide, two-shelf cupboard and deep cutlery drawer alongside the fridge, plus head-height lockers, create good storage space

STORAGE A

With spaces under the twin beds and under the dining seating, plus top lockers running the width of the caravan at each end, storage space can safely be regarded as excellent, considering the compact length of the caravan. The wardrobe is ingeniously spaced above the oven-grill which, in turn, is above the heater unit. The hanging width is a very decent 52cm and the depth, at 78cm, is sufficient for garments of jacket length.

There's a large (97cm wide x 37cm deep) exterior aperture to one of the under-bed spaces – and it leads right through the entire width of the caravan, via a storage unit between the twin beds! Skiing, anybody? There's room for your skis, here.

WHAT WE LIKE

- The generously-sized beds
- The big table
- The simple styling
- The excellent storage, given the size of the caravan

WHAT WE DON'T LIKE

- The heating system is gas-only
- The shower tray is also the washroom/loo floor

OPTIONS

- There are no standard options for Caravelairs

The double-or-twin bed versatility is awesome. You can transform the bed area into a gigantic double, 1.95m long and 2.1m wide



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
Long twin beds and a great place for coffee mugs in between them

The kitchen is compact but all you need is here

The little 450 looks and feels more spacious than its size would suggest

Warmed air comes out from two vents above the heater; this is Marquis's exclusive Caraheat system

Lots of mirrors in the shower-toilet room

considering the kitchen is only 1m long. Both the sink (a practical 36cm x 25cm) and the three-burner hob have smart, black, glass covers. You'd keep them down to do most of the food preparation because surface space is limited. There's also a useful 20cm x 39cm hinged extension; it does intrude into the doorway a little, but there is ample room to walk around it.

TOWING A

Caravelairs have Trigano chassis and AL-KO axles with independent rubber suspension and shock absorbers. There's a little detectable bounce on rough road surfaces but that doesn't in any way mar the 450's excellent road characteristics.

At 1300kg MTPLM, the 450 is firmly in the super-light category, so suitable for a huge range of cars a lot lighter than our beefy SsangYong

Rexton, which takes all our review caravans out. Our test tow was an easy and enjoyable journey. And when we arrived at Little Orchard Caravan Park we unhitched and manhandled the 450 into position with very little effort – just because we could! <<

VERDICT

If you're looking for a twin-bed caravan you'd assume a budget of £13,695 would confine you to the used market – until you discover the Caravelair Antares 450. Even when you factor in £250 for a TV aerial, the 450 is only £13,945. Its furniture is well built. Its fabrics are high quality and give the impression they're very durable. Its double-or-twin bed versatility is awesome. Overall, it's terrific value – so long as you're not looking for a caravan with a separate shower.

INSURANCE

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